

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1, 11 and 13 as follows. For convenience, all pending claims are included.

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:
 - a handle member comprising a body portion defining an opening therethrough, the opening configured to receive fingers of a human hand therethrough, the handle member configured to be grasped by said fingers;
 - a rigid cantilever portion having a base end and a free end, the base end coupled to the handle member defining a slot between the free end and the handle member, the slot being configured to receive at least one handle of at least one bag; ~~and~~
 - a hook extending into the slot between the free end and the handle member, the hook configured to block at least a portion of the slot, wherein at least a portion of the slot defines a generally circular well, the slot angled upwardly from the well toward the free end of the cantilever portion, and wherein the hook has a smaller thickness than the cantilever portion and has a generally triangular shape, the hook having an arcuate edge which is continuous with and forms a portion of the well, the arcuate edge terminating in a generally pointed distal end; and
 - a small gap formed in the periphery of the well between the distal end of the hook and the slot, whereby bag handles are retained in the well by said hook but can easily be removedis angled inwardly toward the well.
2. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the hook has a sharp edge facing the well.
3. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the slot defines a well, and wherein the hook has a rounded edge facing the well.
4. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the handle member, the cantilever portion, and the hook comprise an integral body.
5. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the hook has a first position blocking the slot and a second position providing access to the slot.
6. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 1 further comprising a supplemental handle portion connected to the handle member, the supplemental handle member comprising a giving material.

7. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the hook is attached to the cantilever portion.

8. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the opening has a generally pentagonal shape.

9. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the handle member and the cantilever portion are of a uniform thickness.

10. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the hook has an edge generally conforming to the shape of a well defined by the slot.

11. (Currently Amended) A method for carrying bags comprising:

providing an apparatus comprising a handle member and a rigid cantilever portion, the handle member defining an opening therein and a slot between the handle member and the cantilever portion, the apparatus further comprising a hook attached to the cantilever portion, the slot defining a well and the hook in the slot being continuous with a portion of the well and terminating in a generally barb-like point;

grasping the handle member through the opening;

inserting at least one handle of at least one bag over the cantilever portion and through a space defined by the hook extending into the slot such that the at least one handle is disposed in a well defined by the slot, wherein the hook is angled inwardly toward the well; and

carrying the at least one bag having said at least one handle disposed in said well by holding the handle member.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 11, wherein the hook substantially prevents the at least one handle disposed in the well from sliding off the at least one cantilever portion.

13. (Previously Amended) The apparatus of Claim 1 further comprising:

a second cantilever portion having a base end and a free end, the base end coupled to the handle member defining a slot between the free end and the handle member, the slot being configured to receive at least one handle of at least one bag; and

a hook extending into the slot between the free end of the second cantilever portion and the handle member, the hook configured to block at least a portion of the slot,

wherein at least a portion of the slot defines a well, and wherein the hook is angled inwardly toward the well.

Please add New Claims 14-20 as follows.

14. (New) An apparatus comprising:

a handle member comprising a body portion defining an opening therethrough, the opening configured to receive fingers of a human hand therethrough, the handle member configured to be grasped by said fingers;

a cantilever portion having a base end and a free end, the base end coupled to the handle member defining a slot between the free end and the handle member, wherein at least a portion of the slot defines an arcuate well, the slot being configured to receive at least one handle of at least one bag;

a hook extending into the slot between the free end and the handle member, the hook configured to block at least a portion of the slot, the hook having an arcuate edge which is continuous with and forms a portion of the well, the arcuate edge terminating in a generally pointed distal end, wherein the well terminates in said generally pointed distal end; and

a small gap formed in the periphery of the well between the distal end of the hook and the slot, whereby bag handles are retained in the well by said hook but can easily be removed.

15. (New) An apparatus comprising:

a handle member comprising a body portion defining an opening therethrough, the opening configured to receive fingers of a human hand therethrough, the handle member configured to be grasped by said fingers;

a cantilever portion having a base end and a free end, the base end coupled to the handle member defining a slot between the free end and the handle member, wherein at least a portion of the slot defines a curved well, the slot being configured to receive at least one handle of at least one bag;

a hook extending into the slot between the free end and the handle member, the hook configured to block at least a portion of the slot, the hook having a curved edge terminating in a barb-like distal tip; and

a small gap having a fixed dimension formed in the periphery of the well between the hook and the slot, whereby bag handles are retained in the well by said hook but can easily be removed.

16. (New) The apparatus of Claim 15, wherein the distal tip is sharp.
17. (New) The apparatus of Claim 15, wherein the distal tip is defined by to edges of the hook, the edges being at an acute angle relative to each other.
18. (New) The apparatus of Claim 15, wherein the distal tip is not round.